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March 1, 2021

Re: Written testimony for HB 6517

I'm Fumiko Hoeft, Professor of Psychological Sciences and director of the Brain Imaging Research Center (BIRC) at the University of Connecticut (UConn). I also serve as Director of the Laboratory for Learning Engineering and Neural Systems (brainLENS.org) at UConn and University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and serve as a Senior Scientist at Haskins Laboratories, where I'm the Co-Founder of Haskins' Global Literacy Hub.

As a member of the Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training, I wish to offer my full support for House Bill 6517.

I served on the K-3 screening subcommittee of the Task Force wherein we were assigned charges, including whether or not the Department of Education's "Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments" meets the requirements of Connecticut General Statutes".

Universal screening is the process of using valid and reliable benchmark assessments (measure, tool, etc.) to screen 100% of the student population three times per year. Universal screening data identifies students who may be at risk for reading failure; predicts future success on meeting benchmarks; and documents the adequacy of core general education. This type of student assessment is essential to being able to effectively implement our state's framework for Response to Intervention. Detailed assessment components can be found within the Task Force Report

CSDE is charged with developing or approving reading assessments for use by local and regional boards of education to identify students in kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, who are below proficiency in reading which can also assist in identifying students at risk for dyslexia or other reading-related learning disabilities.

This Menu includes two sections.

- The CSDE describes Section I "General Outcome Measures" as including the only measures that are appropriate for use as screening tools to assist in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for Dyslexia or other reading-related learning disabilities.

- The CSDE does not describe the purpose of Computer Adapted assessments that are listed in Section 2, but states that districts must select an assessment listed in Section 1 even if they select an assessment from Section 2.

The Assessment Sub-Committee found that the current Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments does not fully meet the requirements of section 10- 14t of the general statutes., nor does it adequately reflect the state of current research.

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Specifically, the subcommittee found that:

- No assessment measure listed on the menu measures each required essential component of reading across all grade levels and the Menu does not provide guidance about how to combine measures for the purpose of ensuring that all of the essential components of reading are adequately screened across grade levels.

- Assessments in Part II of the Menu do not meet criteria as a general outcome measure and are not useful for assisting in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for dyslexia, as defined in section 1 of this act, or other reading-related learning disabilities.

- Current research warrants that additional screening components and subcomponents be added to the Menu, as outlined in the Taskforce Report.

- Three current screening measures from Part I of the Menu (aimswebPlus, DIBELS-now Acadience, and easyCBM) have Spanish versions available and one measure (DIBELS-Now Acadiance) is available free of charge.

In addition to recommending that Part II of the current Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments be removed, the subcommittee has made several recommendations designed to support the state's efforts to advance an impactful early screening and intervention model as outlined within Connecticut's Framework for response-to-intervention (RTI); specifically:

- Mandating screening of all K-3 students three times per year

- Reorganizing and repopulating the Menu in accordance with Appendix G of the Task Force Report, to include:

  - a footnote that students should receive literacy instruction in their native language with the ultimate goal of biliteracy, should be administered reading assessments in both English and their native language, if available;

  - a footnote that districts should combine assessments, as necessary, to meet statutory requirements that all essential grade-level components are and related subcomponents are assessed

- The CSDE to communicate and provide guidance to districts on the Revised Approved Menu in order to ensure understanding and accountability.

- We are fortunate that select measures included in Part I of the Menu do have Spanish versions available.

- At least one measure is available for use without charge. This information must be conveyed to districts.

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<mark>Amendments Requested in Section 7:</mark>

- <mark>Line 201-202</mark> (1) measure phonics through **DELETE** ~~nonword and sight word reading~~, **REPLACE WITH** "**real and pseudo word reading**"

- <mark>Line 218-219</mark> students in kindergarten **ADD or at the time of entry into the school system**

- <mark>Line 219-220</mark> **delete** ~~identifying students who are below proficiency in reading.~~ REPLACE WITH **"identifying students who are at-risk for becoming a poor reader."**

The subcommittee is pleased to be able to offer research-supported recommendations that reinforce existing state-level initiatives concerning RTI/SRBI and that have the potential to meaningfully impact K-3 student literacy achievement state-wide.

Sincerely,

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